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Migration, Mobilities, and Changing Political Landscapes

Reframing International Student Mobility with Narrative Inquiry Research

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International student mobility (ISM) has been conventionally examined through an economic, political and geographical lens, leaving students' unique experiences out of the picture. In the current political landscape, especially, in Canada and the U.S., generalized narratives have led to villainization of international students. Their academic and personal journeys are oversimplified as a pursuit for migration, leaving out the full context of their desires and goals. A colonial mindset also underpins this mainstream narrative that frames international student mobility as an institutional tool for economic and political purposes without considering the actual people and their lives that are impacted. Who are the humans and their stories behind the study permit or the postgraduation work permit? What are the journeys and life stories that bring international students to Canada and how can they enrich what we know about international student mobility? With these questions at the forefront, my research makes a case for using narrative inquiry and student-centered storytelling to give back the space to international students so they can present their authentic journey of being away from home for education. Narrative inquiry enables an understanding of mobility beyond static categorizations, emphasizing fluid and evolving identities shaped by transnational movement. By empowering student narratives, we can uncover how the experience of displacement and cultural hybridity itself influences students' academic and personal trajectories. With the potential to inform researchers and scholars in the field, an exploration of narrative inquiries in international student mobility is a rich topic to explore across disciplines.